1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

The Muslim section of the population belongs to the Sunni sect and follows the religious pattern laid down in the Koran as interpreted by the founders of this sect. A devout Muslim is expected to offer prayers five times a day. In Shamirpet this would be the exception rather than the general rule. Some of the Muslim elders offer prayers twice a day, some only once and the rest are contented with their weekly prayers on Friday. The Mulla, the Muslim priest in the village, is the only person who offers the prescribed prayers every day. Fasting during the month of Ramzan is undertaken by a very large number of Muslims, but those maintaining it without a break until the end of the month would not total even a quarter of that number. The Muslims have a high degree of community-consciousness, but in Shamirpet it does not find expression in the form of intense religious devotion among the adherents of the Islamic faith.

With the exception of the Brahmin and the Komti castes, the Hindus have no fixed time for daily worship. The number of people who visit a temple or shrine every day is negligible. But festivals and ceremonies are observed with unfailing regularity. Otherwise the gods are remembered only at times of disease or difficulty. As a rule, only some of the elderly people devote themselves to 'the daily duty of remembering the creator'; the younger people 'have much else to do'. They participate in ceremonies, partake of the festival feasts, and assemble to listen to the reading of the holy books and to the recitation of mythological legends by professionals when they happen to visit the village. The tasks of remembrance and repentance are postponed for old age. Among both men and women, only the elders seem to talk about 'the change of times' and 'the decline in the religious attitudes and ethical standards of the people'. In the everyday thought and speech of the younger generation there is very little of religion; and little conscious effort at seeking any deep religious experience or thrill is to be found among them. In the life of the community under observation, we noticed only two exceptions to this. One of these is the *Urs*, a semi-religious fair, commemorating Jalal Miyan, a local Muslim divine with some reputation for being a holy man. This fair is sponsored by the Muslims but is largely attended by the Hindus also. The second is the annual worship of a village goddess organized by the village. On both these occasions several people are temporarily possessed by the spirit

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AWI India
TELUGU AWI

755 776 782 private sacrifices are taken away by the offerers, and that of the public victim belongs to the headman of the village. The rice, fruit, etc., are distributed among the various officials. The function lasts from about ten a.m. to five p.m.

In the evening, a cart is brought to the image with nine pointed stakes standing upright in it, two at each of the four corners and one in the centre: on each stake a young pig, a lamb, or a fowl is impaled alive. A Mālā, called a *Pambala*, *i.e.* hereditary priest, then sits in the cart dressed in female attire, holding in his hand the clay image of the goddess which was made for the festival. The cart is dragged with ropes to the extreme boundary of the village lands, and both cart and ropes are left beyond the boundary. The Pambalas take away the animals, which all die during the procession, as their share of the offerings.

796 776 782 785 *Living animals impaled in many villages.* This cruel ceremony of impaling live animals is quite common in the eastern part of the Telugu country,[1] and I have come across it in many villages that I have visited. The Rev. F. N. Alexander, the veteran C.M.S. missionary, who lived over fifty years at Ellore, told me that he witnessed it in the town of Ellore the first year that he went there, and wrote a letter to the *Madras Mail* describing it. As a result of his letter, the practice was forbidden by the Government. So now at Ellore the animals are tied on to the stakes without being impaled; but in many villages near Ellore the custom still survives of impaling the unfortunate animals alive. Sometimes there are only four stakes on the cart, sometimes five, and sometimes more. It is not often that there are as many as nine. In one of the villages of the Kurnool district, I found that a similar barbarity was practised in connexion with the hook-swinging ceremony. On the fifth day of the festival in honour of Aṅkalamma, a large car is constructed, with an arrangement of poles projecting

[1] Cf. pp. 59, 65, 69.

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELUGU AW17

about 20 feet in the air. A sheep is then suspended from the pole by iron hooks fastened through the muscles of its back and a band round its middle, and swung round and round. Two or three of the older men in the village said that they had often seen men swing like this with iron hooks fastened into their backs,[1] and that it did not hurt. As soon as the sheep is swung up, buffaloes, sheep and goats are sacrificed, and the car is then dragged in procession through the village.

A cruel pig sacrifice. Sometimes, when there is cattle disease, a pig is buried up to its neck at the boundary of the village, a heap of boiled rice is deposited near the spot, and then all the cattle of the village are driven over the unhappy pig.[2] It is not the custom at Gudivada to sprinkle anything on the cattle as they pass over the poor animal, as is done elsewhere.

There is a remarkable parallel to this form of sacrifice in a description quoted by Mr. E. Thurston, in his *Ethnographical Notes in Southern India*,[3] of an ancient custom among the Lambadis, a wandering tribe of South India:

> "In former times, the Lambadis, before setting out on a journey, used to procure a little child and bury it in the ground up to its shoulders, and then drive their loaded bullocks over the unfortunate victim. In proportion to the bullocks thoroughly trampling the child to death, so their belief in a successful journey increased."

It is possible that this custom of driving the cattle over the head of a buried pig may be connected with the worship of an agricultural goddess, since in ancient Greece the pig was sacred to agricultural deities, *e.g.* Aphrodite, Adonis, and Demeter; but it may also be a survival of some former custom of infanticide or human sacrifice such as prevailed among the Lambadis.

An old man in the Kurnool district once described to me the account that he had received from his fore-

[1] This is the practice in the Hindu *dola-jātra*, swing-festival, celebrated in honour of Durgā, the wife of Śiva. Cf. pp. 61, 76, 82, 83.

[2] See p. 53, 60.

[3] P. 507.

25: Whitehead M-3 (no date) 1921 AW1 India
TELUGU AW17

fathers of the ceremonies observed when founding a new village. An auspicious site is selected and an auspicious day, and then in the centre of the site is dug a large hole, in which are placed different kinds of grain, small pieces of the five metals, gold, silver, copper, iron, and lead, and a large stone, called *boddu-rayee*, *i.e.* navel-stone, standing about three and a half feet above the ground, very like the ordinary boundary stones seen in the fields. And then, at the entrance of the village, in the centre of the main street, where most of the cattle pass in and out on their way to and from the fields, they dig another hole and bury a pig alive. This ceremony would be quite consistent with either of the explanations suggested as to the origin of pig-burying. The pig may be buried at the entrance to the village as the emblem of fertility and strength, to secure the prosperity of the agricultural community, the fertility of the fields, and the health and fecundity of the cattle. Or it may equally be a substitute for an original human sacrifice. The idea that a new building or institution must be inaugurated by the sacrifice of a human life is very common all over India. To this day there is often a panic among the villagers who live near the banks of a river where a bridge is about to be built, because they think that one or more of their babies are sure to be required to bury under the foundations of the first pier. On one of my visits to Kalasapad, in the Cuddapah district, the missionary told me that, when a new ward was opened for their local mission dispensary, no one would go into it, because the people imagined that the first to go in would be the needful sacrifice. Their fears were allayed by a religious service at the opening of the ward; but had it been a Hindu hospital, probably a goat or a sheep would have been killed as a substitute for the human victim.

The idea of substitution, too, is quite common in India. In the hook-swinging ceremony described above,[1]

[1] P. 59.

782
it is common both in the Telugu and Tamil districts to 796
substitute a sheep for a man, and to fasten the iron 785
hooks in the muscles of its back.

Alleged infanticide among Todas. I have been told 847
that, among the Todas of the Nilgiri Hills, it was formerly the custom to place female children, whom it was not desired to rear, on the ground at the entrance of the mund, *i.e.* a group of huts, and drive buffaloes over them. If they survived this ordeal, they were allowed to live.

It is only fair to add that the Todas themselves deny that this custom ever existed. To quote Mr. Thurston again :[1]

"The practice of infanticide, as it prevailed among the Todas of the Nilgiris, is best summed up in the words of an aged Toda during an interview with Colonel Marshall (*A Phrenologist amongst the Todas*, 1873): 'I was a little boy when Mr. Sullivan (the first English pioneer of the Nilgiris) visited these mountains. In those days it was the custom to kill children, but the practice has long died out, and now one never hears of it. I don't know whether it was wrong or not to kill them, but we were very poor, and could not support our children. Now every one has a mantle (*putkūli*), but formerly there was only one for the whole family. We did not kill them to please any god, but because it was our custom. The mother never nursed the child, and the parents did not kill it. Do you think we could kill it ourselves? Those tell lies who say we laid it before the open buffalo-pen so that it might be run over and killed by the animals. We never did such things, and it is all nonsense that we drowned it in buffalo's milk. Boys were never killed—only girls; not those who were sickly and deformed—that would be a sin; but, when we had one girl, or in some families two girls, those that followed were killed. An old woman (kelachi) used to take the child immediately it was born, and close its nostrils, ears and mouth with a cloth thus (here pantomimic action). It would shortly droop its head, and go to sleep. We then buried it in the ground. The kelachi got a present of four annas (4d.) for the deed.' The old man's remark about the cattle-pen refers to the Malagasy custom of placing a new-born child at the entrance of a cattle-pen, and then driving the cattle over it, to see whether they would trample on it or not."

755
Masulipatam. At Masulipatam, where ceremonies 776
are performed very similar to those at Gudivada 782

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 507.